

3 MAY 1974

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT ENCOUNTER GROUPS

I. "Encounter groups, like therapy groups, exist for the purpose of transforming their members in some hoped-for ways." From "Encounter Groups: First Facts"

A. The following is a quote from the BAB official description of the course -- "Primary goals of the laboratory include working on establishing relationships, learning more effective ways of communicating, discovering new self-awareness, and increasing the understanding of forces which influence individual behavior."

B. The following quote is from a memo from D/OTS addressed to the DCI -- "It was designed, through group interaction, to enhance the case officer's operational skills by teaching him more effective ways of communicating and increasing his understanding of the forces which influence human behavior, including his own."

25X1A

II. "Based on the number of individuals who experienced benefit from the groups and on the comparison of the different areas in participants and their controls, it was concluded that overall encounter groups show a modest positive impact, an impact much less than has been portrayed by their supporters and an impact significantly lower than participants' view of their own change would lead one to assume." From "Encounter

*Handwritten Signature: [Signature] JES CIRBY*

Groups: First Facts"

III. Hazards of Encounter Groups in discussing casualties -- "What have we learned from our study of these unfortunate individuals? Their existence and their number alarm us. A casualty rate approaching 10 percent is alarming and unacceptable in an endeavor calculated to foster positive growth." From "Encounter Groups: First Facts"

It should be noted that [REDACTED] is concerned enough about "hazards" that his contract was written at his request to relieve him of any personal responsibility for untoward reactions in individuals who participated in the course. I know of no other officer in this Agency and perhaps in Federal Government who is likewise relieved of responsibility in such a manner. The hazard must be high for [REDACTED] 25X1A Why should it not be equally high for the Agency as the sponsor? Encounter groups have been described as an "ultimate form of psychotherapy" -- so dangerous and exciting it has been called "the interpersonal equivalent of sky diving."

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